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Labour leaders and the war

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# LABOUR LEADERS AND THE WAR.

FELLOW WORKERS,

March, 1901.

You have been led to believe that the war against the Boers was waged to secure justice and freedom for industrious Britons. This was the pretence, but, as a matter of fact, President Kruger offered to give the Outlanders without war a more generous franchise than what the British Government demanded for them, on condition that all other matters in dispute were referred to arbitration. Mr. Chamberlain himself, referring to Mr. Kruger's proposals, said, "We accepted at least nine-tenths of the whole," and further admitted that in his judgment "the remaining tenth was not worth war." When war broke out it was made clear that a very large number of the Outlanders were not British subjects and did not want British intervention. According to Lord Rosmead, the late Governor of the Cape, more than half the Outlanders were on the side of the Transvaal Government, and it is well known that many thousands of them have been fighting against us.

## THE REAL OBJECT OF THE WAR.

It was not for humanity's sake that we forced the Boers to fight. The real object of the war was to get bigger dividends for the millionaires by the substitution of black for white labour. "Niggers" and "nigger labour" are cheap in South Africa, and the big financiers thought and said that if the Kaffirs could be made to work the profits of the lucky shareholders could be enormously increased. Mr. Cecil Rhodes is reported in the *Daily Mail* of August 14th, 1899, before the outbreak of the war, to have said: "We are not going to war for the amusement of royal families as in the past, but we mean practical business." And at the annual meeting of the Consolidated Gold Fields Company on November 14th, 1899, Mr. J. Hays Hammond, the Engineer of the Company, said: "There ought to be no difficulty in obtaining eighty thousand Kaffirs to work the mines." And he went on to say: "With good government there should be an abundance of labour, and with abundance of labour there will be no difficulty in cutting down wages, because it is preposterous to pay a Kaffir the present wages. His wages are altogether disproportionate to his requirements." By this policy of employing more Kaffir labour and of cutting down wages, Mr. Hammond estimated that the savings upon the last year's tonnage of ore crushed would give an additional profit of £2,199,000, which, he explained, would represent an increase in dividends of forty-five per cent. Wages for coloured people in the mines were, under the Transvaal Government, 10s. a week. Those now employed since the conquest of the Transvaal are only paid 7s. 6d. a week. At Bloemfontein several were flogged for refusing to work for a wage of 10s. a week.

## LABOUR WHERE MR. RHODES HOLDS SWAY.

At the Kimberley mines where Mr. Rhodes' ideal conditions of labour prevail, the "compound system" has been devised. A "compound" is a huge barrack or prison in which the natives are compulsorily stabled in the intervals of their work. They are paid from 1s. to 2s. for a ten hours' day, and are

forced to purchase everything they require from the truck stores of the Company. The law allows them to be worked **seven days a week**. There are other evils attached to the "compound system" so horrible that they must now be passed over in silence. As showing that service in these compounds is compulsory, it may be remembered that some natives who tried to escape in December last were shot down by British troops.

### LABOUR UNDER THE BOERS.

In the Transvaal different conditions prevailed. The ordinary wages of the Kaffirs was from 3s. to 3s. 9d. per day of eight hours, and by Transvaal law they might work only **six days a week**. White labour was exceptionally well paid. Cornish and Northumberland miners, who have been forced to return home because of the war, tell us that their wages amounted to more than £30 per month, while their total taxation did not exceed 3½d. in the pound. These tell us that life was very comfortable and that for the peaceable and law-abiding Englishman it was possible to live as comfortably in the Transvaal as at home with the prospect of saving a great deal more money than could be done in England. When strikes took place the Boer Government protected the strikers, but refused police protection for "blacklegs."

### HOW TO CHEAPEN LABOUR.

The *Mining World and Engineering Record*, of December 16th, 1899, when discussing the effect of the war, said, "When new conditions prevail, white wages **must come down**." This then is the secret of the whole matter. This cruel and unnecessary war is being pushed to a merciless conclusion so that the already inordinately rich may become yet richer; so that the big dividends already paid may become bigger still by the enslavement of the natives and by the reduction of white men's wages. Speaking to the Chartered Company's shareholders (see the *Times*, December 15th, 1899), Earl Grey is reported to have said that "the directors are already making inquiries on their own account as to the possibility of obtaining 'Asiatic' labour."

### WHY WE REFUSED ARBITRATION.

With such damning evidence as to the real objects of the promoters of the war, it is easily understood why Mr. Chamberlain refused the repeated offers of President Kruger to submit matters in dispute to Arbitration. We had a very weak case and a body of Arbitrators would speedily have found that out. The Capitalists, who bought up or hired the Press both in South Africa and in England to clamour for war, are largely foreigners. The cry which they raised about the Outlanders' grievances, the arming of the Boers, a Dutch conspiracy, etc., were mere pretexts to deceive. The enormous sums, said to be £2,500,000 per annum, which they made out of the Rhodesian Diamond Mines at Kimberley emboldened them in their efforts to become the masters of the Transvaal Gold Mines also. They have all along wanted war to double their profits by enabling them to use cheap forced native labour. And for this object the British people have to pay untold millions, and British blood is poured out like water on South African soil!

### THE PRICE THAT IS BEING PAID.

The end has not yet come, but the cost already incurred in blood and money is appalling. More than thirteen thousand of our fellow countrymen lie in nameless graves, the victims of bullet or disease, while more than forty thousand others are for the most part either hopelessly crippled or

enfeebled for life from similar causes. The death rate from disease is now at the rate of twenty per day. For months past we have been told that the war would soon be over, yet the ships still take out fresh supplies of troops and bring home invalids and cripples, while the South African hospitals are full to repletion and the newspapers continue their daily tale of wounds and death. When this war began, trade was good, and the nation was prosperous. Now all is changed. The cost of living has enormously increased; the national revenue is insufficient to meet the demands upon it, and, notwithstanding that fresh taxes have already been imposed, still heavier taxation must inevitably follow. It is estimated that, inclusive of this year's expenditure, the war will cost us £150,000,000. Of this amount some £23,000,000 has been raised by taxation and £65,000,000 by borrowing, and we have still to provide in some way about £62,000,000. The Boer loss is still more terrible. We feel the war's dire effects at a distance. They see it day by day. Whatever have been their faults these men have been fighting for their homes and liberties. They have seen their country ravaged, their homes destroyed and their best manhood given to the sword.

### MAKING ANOTHER POLAND.

All this has come about because of a difference which might have been peaceably settled and about which Mr. Chamberlain said "I do not think it is worth war." The resistance of the Boers has been intensified and the difficulties of arriving at a reasonable settlement aggravated by Lord Salisbury's avowed intention of not leaving to the Boers "one shred of independence." We have turned South Africa into a vast shambles, alienated the loyal Dutch population of our own colonies, and war only created a racial hatred which it may never be possible to allay. Much of the mischief already done can never be undone. For good or for ill the two Republics have been annexed to the British Empire, and it is now proposed to rule them by force, denying to the people the enjoyment of representative government. Disregarding the protests of the Boers we continued to mass troops upon their frontier, and refused to arbitrate, so that we were really the aggressors and compelled them to declare war in self-defence—and this we did under the pretence of winning freedom for the Outlanders. We end the war by disfranchising the whole population of the two States and placing under martial law large portions of Cape Colony and Natal. Does not this wretched policy carry its own condemnation? In their magnificent resistance the Boers are showing the quality of which we as Englishmen are so proud—preferring death to the loss of liberty.

### A BETTER WAY.

Why should so brave a people suffer the loss of liberty? Never since the case of Poland has any civilised country destroyed a state and annexed its territory. It is universally admitted that the government of the Orange Free State was a model one, and even in the case of the Transvaal Lord Roberts has by recent proclamation continued its tariff and given renewed force to its laws. Why, then, should these two states be utterly destroyed? Some settlement that would leave a brave and industrious people a government of their own choice, at the same time taking ample precautions against future armaments, would bring peace to a distracted country, and would save the British nation the indelible disgrace and ignominy of stamping out their liberties and freedom. **A policy of bloodshed never yet brought loyalty and love.**

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